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ABSTRACT

The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration 1987 report, "Leaders for America's Schools," has brought renewed attention to the underrepresentation of women and minorities in educational administration. This study attempts to collect data on placement practices of educational administration professors, analyze findings, and discuss implications for women and minority graduates. Survey data (open-ended questions) were collected from department chairpersons and a random sample of professors selected from the University Council for Educational Administration membership. Data were analyzed using qualitative methods, coding like responses into categories or theme areas. Results suggest that traditional stereotypic images are most likely to inhibit placement opportunities in positions in which minorities and women have not been "seen" in the designated role or setting. Professors can work to increase these candidates' visibility. Departments of education can more actively socialize students to the importance of leadership development through professional organizations or community service work. Faculty can formalize the development of students' job search and self-marketing skills and emphasize the importance of (1) maintaining close working relationships and visibility profiles with advisors and other faculty; (2) developing mentoring and networking opportunities in professional circles; and (3) encouraging the early identification and communication of career plans and goals. Job mobility factors also need to be addressed. Efforts to help minority and women placements should also benefit administrator preparation programs as a whole. Included are 34 references. (MLH)

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PLACEMENT OF WOMEN AND MINORITY GRADUATES IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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ABSTRACT

The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987) has brought renewed attention to the underrepresentation of women and minorities in educational leadership. The purpose of this study was to collect data on placement practices of faculty in educational administration preparation programs, and to analyze these findings in terms of the implications for women and minority graduates.

PLACEMENT OF WOMEN AND MINORITY GRADUATES

The underrepresentation of women and minorities in positions of educational leadership has been a focus of concern and study for the past 15 years or more. This issue has received renewed attention (and perhaps legitimization!) in Leaders for America's Schools, a report of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Aministration (1987). The report suggests that minorities are "dramatically underrepresented" (p.11) in educational administration, and that the minority enrollments in education preparation programs has failed to increase, or in some instances declined. Currently, minorities represent approximately 14% of school administrators overall, including approximately 3% of superintendents and 16% of school principals (Office of Minority Affairs, AASA, 1985). Among professors of educational administration, minority representation is about 9% (McCarthy, 1987).

For women, the picture is somewhat different. Female enrollments in educational administration programs have increased dramatically; in comparison, the placement rate in positions of educational leadership has increased, but not with the same magnitude. For instance, the percentage of women earning masters

degrees in educational administration increased from 21% in 1971-72 to 46% in 1981-82. Over the same period, women earning doctorates in educational administration increased from 6% to 39% (U.S. Department of Health, Education, & Welfare, 1975; U.S. Department of Education, 1986). By comparison, the percentage of women in administrative or supervisory roles increased from 14% in 1974 to 26% in 1984-85 (Office of Minority Affairs, AASA, 1985). For some positions, the placement rate of women is substantially less; women represent less than 3% of school superintendents and only 8% of secondary principals (Office of Minority Affairs, AASA, 1985). In the educational administration professorship, the percentage of women increased from 2% in 1972 to 12% in 1986 (McCarthy, 1987). These statistics suggest that the disparity between the number of females qualified for leadership positions and the number placed in leadership positions has failed to decline.

Literature and research on the status of women in educational administration, and to a lesser degree that of minorities, has offered explanations for the underrepresentation of these graduates in positions of leadership (see such works as Adkison, 1981, 1985; Biklen & Brannigan, 1980; Doughty, 1980; Gross & Trask,

1976; Lovelady-Dawson, 1980; Mark, 1981; Moore & Sagaria, 1981; Schneider, 1986; Shakeshaft, 1986; Sizemore, 1986; Stockard & Kempner, 1981; Tracy, 1985; Weber, Feldman, & Poling, 1981.) These explanations range from societal influences such as sex-role stereotyping or racial bias to factors which may covary with gender or race such as mobility, educational and experience background, career aspirations, socialization, and career paths or profiles. These works and others (see below) have challenged many of the assumptions about differences between male and female administrators --- white and minority leaders. Further, some have offered strategies for reducing the barriers to female/minority underrepresentation in educational leadership (see such works as Fulton, 1983; Green, 1982; Jones & Montenegro, 1983; Mackett & Frank, 1981; Marshall, 1981; McCarthy & Zent, 1982; McDade & Drake, 1982; Mertz, 1985; Sagaria, 1985; Schmuck, 1980, 1986; Shakeshaft, 1985; Stark & Lowther, 1985; Webb, Stout, & Metha, 1986).

Although the literature on women and minorities in educational administration is extensive, few studies focus directly on placement practices of professors in educational administration preparation programs. The purpose of this study was to collect data on the

placement practices of educational administration faculty, and to analyze that data in terms of its implications for women and minority graduates. The study necessarily examines and reports data on placement practices for all graduates, but study implications are directed primarily at women and minority graduates.

Methodology

Survey data were collected from professors in departments of educational administration at UCEA institutions. A total of 159 professors were selected from the UCEA membership, including all department chairpersons (n=53) and a random sample of professors (n=106). A total of 92 responses were returned, including 24 usable responses from department chairpersons, 37 usable responses from faculty, and 21 nonusable responses. (Non-usable responses were typically from professors who were adjunct, emeritus, or other faculty who indicated that they were only peripherally related to educational administration placement activities and felt they could not adequately respond to the survey questions.) Survey data were analyzed on the 61 usable responses, yielding a 45%

response rate for department chairpersons, a 35% response rate for other faculty, and an overall response rate of 38%.

Demographic data on respondents indicated that most respondents were tenured (82.5%) and held the rank of full professor (56%) or associate professor (30%); the remaining 14% of respondents were equally divided between the assistant professor or "other" rank. The average number of years in the professoriate was 16 (s.d.=8.3) with a range from 2 to 41 years; the average number of years in the department or institution was 13.5 (s.d.=7.5) with a range from 1 to 31 years. Prior administrative experience of respondents was a positively skewed distribution with a mean of 8.6 years (s.d.= 8.9), a median of 5 years, and a range from 0 to 32 years. Most respondents were white males, with only 3.5% of respondents indicating minority status and 14% of respondents indicating that they were female. Overall, demographic characteristics of respondents were very similar to those of a recent national study of professors of educational administration in both UCEA and non-UCEA institutions (see McCarthy, 1987).

Survey data were qualitative responses to open-ended questions about practices, problems, and factors related to the placement of educational administration

graduates with parallel questions on the placement of women and minority graduates in particular. Respondents were asked to: 1) describe both the formal and informal procedures or methods utilized to help place educational administration graduates in positions of educational leadership; 2) describe the typical problems encountered by graduates (and women and minorities) in securing leadership positions; 3) describe the department and/or individual's reputation for placement of graduates (and women and minorities) in leadership positions, including a description of factors which affect their reputation; and 4) describe what type and how extensive a role departments of educational administration "should" play in placement of graduates, including implications for faculty and students.

Respondent data were analyzed using qualitative research methods, coding like responses into categories or theme areas. Data were read and analyzed initially for development of major theme areas, and subsequent reanalyzation was conducted to more finely discriminate between and among subject response categories. Final data analysis was validated by a review of coded subject responses by two faculty/staff colleagues familiar with qualitative research methodology.

Results

Formal Placement Services

Most formal services or procedures established for helping graduate students obtain positions of educational leadership seem to be provided at the university level, with 78% of respondents indicating that a university placement office was available for graduate students. A few respondents (13%) indicated that the College of Education provided a placement service to education students. Department placement efforts were also identified by 53% of respondents, and typically included a range of activities such as posting educational administration openings on department bulletin boards or job files, circulating job openings among faculty or in student newsletters, or making professional publications or newsletters available to students and faculty (e.g. Chronicle of Higher Education, school boards association publications, superintendents or principals association publications). Less than 5% of respondents indicated that job search training and advisement (e.g. resume writing, developing interview skills, etc.) was conducted through internship seminars or department workshops.

Informal Placement Activities

Most informal activity related to placement of students could be categorized as "networking" practices. More than 90% of faculty respondents indicated that "contacts with the field" were typically used to aid in placing graduate students in leadership positions. These contacts seemed to be stronger or more frequently utilized between faculty and former graduates who were in decision-making/leadership roles. A host of activities seemed to be associated with the networking theme, most typically: 1) bringing students in contact with potential employers through professional conferences, receptions, and seminars; or 2) placing phone calls and writing letters of nomination or letters of reference to professional acquaintances.

The factors which were identified as influencing the use of informal procedures were: 1) the extensiveness of the faculty member's contacts with the field, especially with former graduates; 2) the student's "visibility" with the faculty or department -- for instance, recent graduates were more often referred to employers; 3) the strength of relationship between student and advisor; 4) the focus of the student's graduate program; and 5) the faculty member's degree of priority for placement activities ---some students were

said to choose their advisor on the basis of his/her placement reputation.

Interestingly, less than 5% of respondents suggested the student's internship experience as an informally established method for placing students in educational administration positions. A slightly higher percentage of respondents (9%) indicated that students often had their own networks established through previous employers.

Typical Placement Problems of Graduates

There were several types of problems identified which inhibit the placement of graduates into positions of educational leadership. These responses were categorized into four major theme areas. The first and most frequent response (62%) was the unwillingness of students to move to other districts or regions to obtain leadership positions. Respondents felt that graduates put too many constraints on the position they would take, and mobility or geographic region was the most common. Responses suggested that students wanted to stay in the same region because they preferred more urban/suburban settings to rural settings, or because it was difficult for the spouse in dual career families to relocate, or because a move would constitute financial loss due to moving/housing expenses or loss of

retirement benefits. Out-of-state moves were also inhibited by variance in state certification requirements.

A second major theme (47% of responses) was the inadequacy of students' prior administrative or leadership experience. Respondents felt that students were naive about the power of their administrative degree or certificate relative to the importance of appropriate leadership experience. Many felt that students often had little to distinguish themselves in the administrative job market from other classroom teachers holding an administrative certificate. The lack of prior leadership experience seemed especially critical for students earning a doctoral degree.

A related placement problem or theme was the lack of appropriate "self-marketing" skills of graduates (27% of responses). Respondents suggested that candidates often lacked appropriate job search skills (e.g. resume writing, interviewing), applied to jobs for which they were not appropriately qualified, failed to make career decisions early enough in their degree program, made their letters of application or vitas too general to distinguish themselves in the job market, or relied on weak, vague, or general letters of reference.

A final problem category seemed to be related to

local administrative selection practices or regional market conditions (23% of responses). Some responses indicated that there simply were not enough openings for the number of graduates available. Others indicated that local districts seemed to rely heavily on "hiring from within" and that candidates had to have "inside connections", go through local district leadership training or pre-service sponsorship programs, or "cue up" for administrative positions within their employing districts or educational organizations. District desegregation quotas also influenced the placement of graduates in certain regions. Local politics and the serendipity of "being in the right place at the right time" were unpredictable factors in the placement of graduates.

Typical Placement Problems of Women and Minorities

The pattern of responses regarding typical problems with the placement of women and minorities was somewhat similar to problems with graduates in general, especially regarding mobility (47%) and prior administrative/leadership experience (39%). However, there were some notable differences in responses and response frequency. First, "traditional sex-role stereotyping" was identified as the foremost problem in the placement of women graduates (66% of responses).

PLACEMENT

Faculty indicated that school boards and communities (and some superintendents) were often very traditional or conservative in their administrator preferences, and had difficulty envisioning a woman in many leadership roles (e.g. at the secondary principal or superintendent level), especially when no woman had previously served in a line administrative position. Some respondents indicated that women were in demand (16%), but said that this was more likely to occur where other women had already assumed leadership roles.

Responses regarding the placement of minority graduates were more varied. Some responses suggested that there were no problems placing minority candidates (31%), especially if it was a minority-dominated district or urban center. A few responses (12%) suggested that minority candidates were thought to be less qualified relative to other candidates (e.g. writing/spelling, test-taking, and other academic skills) ---largely due to the effect of past segregated educational programs. Consequently, their placement in some suburban school districts or university faculty positions was more difficult.

For both women and minority graduates, the lack of strong mentors or advocates (19%) was identified as a typical problem in placement. Also, 8% of respondents

suggested that women and minorities may get placed (or stuck!) in dead-end staff positions which inhibit their consideration for certain line administrative positions later in their careers.

Reputation for Placement of Graduates

Most respondents (77%) felt that they or their department had a "good" to "excellent" reputation for placement of graduates in positions of educational leadership; 23% of respondents indicated that their reputation was "fair" to "poor". The factors which seemed to positively influence reputation were: 1) close contact with the field --- especially alumni; 2) a strong program reputation due to the strength of the faculty; 3) high program standards and quality graduates, partially due to strong recruitment/admission standards; 4) strong institutional/department image due to size or number of alumni in leadership positions in the state ---e.g. flagship institutions which dominate the region because they are "the only game in town". Factors which inhibit placement seemed to be a relatively new faculty ("the new kids on the block") with few connections to local or regional educational organizations; or a faculty whose institution or department is overshadowed by a larger flagship institution's influence.

PLACEMENT

Reputation for Placement of Women and Minorities

Most respondents (68%) felt that they or their department's reputation was "reasonably good" for placing women and minority graduates, although many suggested that "there was more to do in this area". Some 15% of respondents indicated that their department had initiated some formal services, strategies, or professional organizations for increasing the placement of women (and in some cases minorities) into positions of leadership. These activities included job search advisement, socialization to leadership roles, skills workshops, mentoring, and professional networking activities.

Recommended Role/Involvement in Placement of Graduates

The majority of respondents (74%) said that their department should play an "active" or "very active" role in the placement of graduates. Some acknowledged, however, that there was little individual faculty incentive for spending the additional time it would take to be more involved in placement efforts. Most suggested that the primary implications of an active placement role would be better contact and interaction with the field (for research, teaching, and service), and improved recruitment/attraction of quality students. A few suggestions were aimed at improving placement

efforts of women and minorities, including recommendations to: 1) emphasize a quality internship experience for these candidates; 2) encourage women to take "more substantive courses such as computer applications or school business management"; and 3) gain a better understanding of the priorities of school boards in administrator selection ---"they have different criteria than we (faculty) do for selection --- we need to be better informed".

Discussion and Implications

The intent of this study was to describe and address some of the problems related to the placement of women and minority graduates in positions of educational leadership. Although the following discussion will be focused on the implications of the study results for the placement of women and minorities, many of the issues or recommendations are relevant for all graduates of educational administration preparation programs.

The first and perhaps most difficult issue is the effect of stereotyping on placement opportunities. The study results suggest that traditional stereotypic images are most likely to inhibit placement opportunities in situations in which women or minorities

have not been "seen" in the designated role or setting. This finding is consistent with stereotyping theory and person perception research which suggests that attributional biases are most potent when a limited amount of person-information is available (Stewart, Powell, & Chetwynd, 1979). When only minimal information is available, individuals are more likely to rely on generalizations associated with characteristics such as race, color, gender, age, or nationality in forming behavioral attributions. The causal attributions associated with gender and race often work against women and minorities in competition for certain administrative roles.

Professors of educational administration may help reduce the influence of stereotyping on job placement opportunities for women and minorities by "educating" administration students, school board members, superintendents, community members, and other decision-makers as opportunities arise. For instance, professors may share research information about the availability and effectiveness of women administrators (Biklen & Brannigan, 1980; Fischel & Pottker, 1977; Gross & Trask, 1976; Shakeshaft, 1986). Or, professors may take a more active role in placing women and minorities in internship experiences with school districts or

educational organizations that have not typically hired women and minorities in administrative roles. Professors may also encourage consideration of women or minority candidates when serving in consulting roles or administrative searches for school boards or educational agencies. Similarly, professors may help school boards, communities, superintendents, and other selection decision-makers identify job-related criteria and competencies important in reviewing candidate qualifications so that emphasis on non-relevant characteristics is reduced. Any efforts which improve the visibility of quality women and minority candidates in non-traditional administrative roles, breaking the initial image barriers, may help reduce the effects of stereotyping on placement opportunities.

Another important concern is the development of early and appropriate leadership experiences among women and minority candidates (as well as other graduates). Departments of educational administration may take an active role in socializing students to the importance of leadership development throughout their preparation programs. For instance, administration students should be encouraged to assume leadership responsibilities while teaching or working in non-administrative capacities. Leadership skills could be developed and

demonstrated through professional organization or community service work, department chair or lead teacher roles, extra-curricular administrative functions, curriculum committee leadership, or preparation program simulations and skill development exercises. Also, professors may need to encourage more meaningful internship experiences for students so that they have adequate opportunity to develop and demonstrate appropriate leadership skills. As the report from the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987) suggests, preparation programs should include the study of "the technical core of administration and the acquisition of vital administrative skills, supervised practice, and demonstration of competence". Women and minority graduates, as well as other administration students, need to understand that their administrative degree or certificate may not be sufficient to distinguish themselves among other graduates in candidate selection, and that they must be equipped with certain administrative skills and experiences.

Another implication for preparation program faculty is the importance of formalizing or standardizing the development of students' job search and self-marketing skills. Although some departments seem to encourage

these activities in internship seminars and workshops (and some faculty are involved in activites which specifically target women and minority students), the prevalence of these types of activities is apparently low.

Other "messages" regarding job placement that may need to be communicated to women and minority students include 1) the importance of maintaining a close working relationship and a "visible" profile with advisors and other professors; 2) the importance of developing mentor and networking opportunities in professional circles; and 3) early identification and communication of career plans and goals.

A final and significant concern regarding the placement of graduates, including women and minorities, is the mobility factor. Although individuals must clearly set their own priorities and make their own choices regarding geographic moves to accomodate career goals, two recommendations which have been made by the Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987) which could reduce some of the mobility problems are: 1) "licenses should be portable from state to state" (p.27); and 2) "school administrators should be able to transfer retirement benefits from state to state" (p.28). Efforts to meet and support these

recommendations could lower some of the mobility restrictions to which graduates currently respond.

Conclusions

The disparity between the number of women (and to a lesser degree minorities) receiving degrees in educational administration and the number placed in positions of educational leadership is not a new or a simple problem, as suggested by much of the past research. Results of this study reiterate some of the previously identified factors which inhibit the placement of women and minorities in positions of leadership. However, one of the most significant findings may be that a sample dominated by white males, well established in the professorship, have most frequently identified traditional stereotyping as a contributing factor in the placement problems faced by women and minorities in educational administration. Although this finding may generate a "so what's new" response from readers, this researcher believes it is a reflection of a changed tone or attitude about the status of women and minorities. It may be indicative of a movement away from the tendency to "blame the victim" for his plight and towards an acknowledgement of the

realities of stereotyping influences. This movement in attitude may be a result of previous research efforts as well as early "consciousness-raising" endeavors.

Further, the study results suggest that placement efforts to reduce the underrepresentation of women and minorities in educational administration may bring benefits to preparation programs, educational administration faculty, and other graduates as well. Specifically, student recruitment and field contacts for research, service, and teaching efforts may be enhanced by increased placement activity. In fact, a sort of cycle seems to be suggested by the collective findings of this study. Specifically, (1) quality preparation programs and faculty lead to (2) effective recruitment of strong students which results in (3) quality graduates who (4) when placed favorably in positions of leadership (5) further enhance research/service/teaching efforts which improves (6) program quality. Through continued and improved efforts in placing women and minority graduates in positions of educational leadership, educational organizations may benefit from diverse and effective leaders, and departments of educational administration may enhance the attainment of certain program and professional goals.

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